

REMARKS

Claims 1-38 are pending. This paper has been submitted to satisfy the requirement for a §114 Submission in connection with the Request for Continued Examination (RCE) filed contemporaneously herewith. In this paper, new claims 21-38 have been added to more clearly indicate differences between embodiments of the present invention and the cited reference.

At the outset, Applicant would like to thank the Examiner for graciously extending Applicant's representative an interview to discuss the rejections in the Final Office Action. During the interview, the rejections were argued to be improper on grounds that the Nagai patent does not disclose, nor does it teach or suggest, forming a "partition table" as recited in claim 1. Instead of a partition table, the Nagai patent discloses using a variable-length code table, which transforms data into code strings. As emphasized, these code strings do not constitute length information of the type recited in claim 1 and thus Nagai can neither anticipate nor render obvious claim 1, its dependent claims, or any of the other pending claims which also recite a partition table.

Also, during the interview, it was emphasized that the partition table is included in the transmitted picture signal and that the length information in the partition table indicates bit-length numbers of the information regions in the picture signal. These new features are not taught or suggested by Nagai and have been incorporated into new claims presented in this paper. A more detailed discussion of the differences between the claims and Nagai, including the newly added claims, is provided below.

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In the Final Office Action, the Examiner maintained the rejection of claims 1-6 and 13-20 for being anticipated by the Nagai patent and the rejection of claims 7-12 for being obvious by Nagai. Applicant submits that this rejection is improper for the reasons noted in the Request for Reconsideration under 37 CFR § 1.116 filed on May 26, 2004 and for the following additional reasons.

Claim 1 recites a method having two steps for encoding a picture signal. The first step includes partitioning picture information of one block group into respective information regions. The second step includes "forming a partition table having length information indicating a length of each of the information regions." (Emphasis added)(See, e.g., Figure 3 of Applicants' drawings). The Nagai patent does not disclose this second step.

In interpreting a claim term during examination, a patent examiner is permitted to give that term its broadest reasonable interpretation not inconsistent with the specification. See MPEP § 2111. While this rule is generally accepted, a patent examiner may not ascribe a definition to a claim term that effectively removes that feature from the claim. *Id.* Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner has done precisely this in interpreting the term "partition table" recited in claim 1.

More specifically, the Examiner has completely overlooked the meaning of the word "partition" in the phrase "partition table" recited in the claims. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (on-line version) defines the word "partition" as something that divides. By the express language of claim 1, it is therefore clear that the invention encodes a picture signal using a table which

divides the information regions therein based on length information. The Nagai patent discloses using a code table for encoding a picture signal, but this code table does not perform a division of any kind either with respect to information regions or any other information contained in an encoded picture signal.

The Nagai code table is disclosed as a variable-length code table which describes a relationship between coded object values and code words (e.g., variable length code words) in a memory. (See column 13, lines 10-15). Using this table, transformer 30 transforms data output from selector 29 into a simplified code string which consists of variable-length codes. This simplified code string is then redundantly included in the transmitted picture signal. (See Fig. 8). The Nagai code table, thus, does not partition information regions of any kind during picture signal encoding as recited in claim 1, but rather is used solely to transform input data into code strings. Absent performing any partition function, it is respectfully submitted that the code table disclosed in Nagai cannot properly be said to correspond to the "partition table" recited in claim 1.

In view of the foregoing, it therefore appears the Examiner has completely ignored the term "partition" before the phrase "partition table" in claim 1. Ignoring the meaning of this claim term effectively removes the feature of a "partition table" from the claim and therefore constitutes an unreasonable interpretation in violation of the standard imposed in MPEP § 2111. For at least these additional reasons, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 is patentably distinguishable from the Nagai patent.

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Applicant further submits that the claims depending from claim 1 are allowable, not only by virtue of their dependency from claim 1 but also based on the features separately recited therein. For example, the Nagai patent does not disclose "channel coding the information regions in redundancies depending on an order of importance of the information regions indicated in the partition table" as recited in claim 3, "wherein the channel coding is performed with a greater amount of redundancy for an information region having a higher order of importance indicated in the partition table than for an information region having a lower order of importance" as recited in claim 4, and "forming the partition table by converting a maximum length of each of the information regions into a number of bits" (emphasis added) as recited in claim 6.

The remaining independent claims are also submitted to be allowable over Nagai, at least by virtue of their recitation of a partition table used for picture signal encoding. For example, claim 7 recites "forming a partition table having length information indicating lengths of the header region, the motion vector region, and discrete cosine transform coefficient region; and transmitting the partition table with the header region, motion vector region, and discrete cosine transform coefficient region as an encoded picture signal." None of these features are taught or suggested in Nagai. The claims depending from claim 7 are submitted to be allowable by virtue of their dependency from claim 7 and for the features separately recited therein. Claim 15 and its dependent claims are also distinguishable.

New claims 21-38 have been added to the application.

Claim 21 recites that the method of claim 1 further includes "forming the picture signal to include the partition table and the information regions." (See, for example, page 9 and Fig. 3 of Applicant's drawings for support). The Nagai patent does not teach or suggest these features. More specifically, Nagai discloses a variable-length code table to generate code strings in a picture signal, however the table itself is not included in the picture signal as recited in claim 1. For at least these reasons, it is submitted that claim 21 is allowable over Nagai.

Claim 22 recites that "the partition table is located at a position in front of the information regions in the picture signal." (See, for example, Fig. 3 and page 9 of the specification for support). The Nagai patent does not teach or suggest these features.

Claim 23 recites "wherein the length information in the table includes a plurality of bit-length numbers, each representing a number of bits allocated to a respective one of the information regions in the picture signal." See page 9 of the specification for illustrative support, where, for example, a bit-length number of 4 indicates that a 4-bit field is provided in the picture signal for one information, a bit-length number of 7 indicates that a 7-bit field is provided in the picture signal for another region, etc. The Nagai patent does not teach or suggest including bit-length numbers of the type recited in claim 23 in its picture signal. Accordingly, it is submitted that claim 23 is allowable over Nagai.

Claim 24 recites that "each bit-length number is different from a code used to represent information in a respective one of the information regions." See, for example, page 9 for support. The Nagai patent not only does not teach or suggest these features. In fact, Nagai teaches directly away from these features by disclosing that the only information included in the picture signal that is derived from its code table is the codes themselves. Nagai does not teach or suggest including "bit-length numbers" in a picture signal as recited in the claims.

Claim 25 recites that "each bit-length number represents a maximum number of bits allocated to a respective one of the information regions in the picture signal." The Nagai patent does not teach or suggest these features.

Claim 26 recites transmitting the picture signal formed in (3) of claim 21. Nagai does not teach or suggest forming a picture signal of this type and thus does not teach or suggest the subject matter of claim 26.

Claim 27 recites "decoding the picture signal based on the length information in the partition table transmitted in the picture signal." Nagai does not transmit a partition table in its picture signal and thus fails to teach or suggest the features of claim 27.

Claim 28 recites "determining bit positions of each of the information regions in the picture signal based on the length information in the transmitted partition table." Nagai clearly does not teach or suggest these features.

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Claim 29 recites that the decoding includes "channel decoding the information regions based on the length information in the partition table transmitted in the picture signal." Nagai clearly does not teach or suggest these features.

Claims 30 - 38 recite the features of claims 21-29 depending from claim 15 and thus are also allowable over Nagai.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of all the rejections and objections made by the Examiner is hereby respectfully requested. In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and prompt allowance of the application is respectfully requested.

To the extent necessary, Applicants petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR §1.136. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with this application, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 16-0607 and credit any excess fees to the same Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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